



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 44, No. 5 January 31 , 2017 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

MAKING A GODLY DIFFERENCE!

The sad reality is that many of today's churches are spiritually and morally impotent— having turned away from JESUS, HIS WORD, and HIS GOSPEL. Thus, there is a severe poverty of purity, holiness, and genuine love. These are MIGHTY WEAPONS of war; but we cast them aside... HOWEVER, let's not apply this to 'them'... let us receive exhortation and correction from the LORD— and NOT primarily to keep or bring God's favor on America; but PRIMARILY so as to not BLASPHEME CHRIST; and so as to GLORIFY CHRIST; and so as demonstrate the power of the GOSPEL!

WHERE ARE WE IN ALL OF THIS?

What are the areas where we must have repentance and a return unto the LORD? WE are NOT immune to the deadly trends of today's Christendom!

**** MANY are rejecting God's standard of servant leadership.**

God's Word plainly establishes pastors/elders as God's servant leaders in the church. They are God's under-shepherds. They are supposed to be men called and equipped by God, men who have God's calling to LEAD BY EXAMPLE and who have God's authority to "set the church in order" under

the guidance of the Holy Scriptures. They are men charged with the responsibility to preach God's eternal truth without fear or favor. **However, in many of our churches today, a pastor is nothing more than an errand boy for the power elite within the church.** He cannot preach an uncompromising sermon without risking the wrath and ire of the board or committee that really runs the church. He is not God's man; he is the deacons' man or the man of those with the most power and/or money....

OR he is HIS OWN man building HIS OWN kingdom using DECEIVING WORDS to exalt himself.

As a result, such pastors have become little more than religious politicians. Thus, sermons are designed to please, not convict; designed to raise support for programs rather than to develop disciples of Jesus Christ. Such men are not shepherds; they are hirelings.

Among the hirelings are many false shepherds who through covetousness lead many astray: 2 Peter 2:1-22. The Word of God has far more warnings against shepherds than He does against any 'power elite' in the churches!

**** Many are focused on entertainment and/or man-centered worship.**

Music plays an important role in worship. This has been true since the days of the Old Testament. However, the purpose of the church service is not to please my musical taste; it is not to entertain me. **A New Testament worship service is for the worship of God;** and for the building up of the saints in godly living; and in being equipped to live godly and unashamed before a watching world.

Therefore, since GOD HIMSELF is to be the central focus of worship, our central focus in worship will be the Reading, Preaching, Teaching of the Word of God; followed by testifying responses to the Word of God, as when Ezra preached in Nehemiah's day. Moreover, there are many songs which were 'said' or 'sung' in worship— the Holy Spirit has preserved the

WORDS but not the tunes. All of the preserved 'words' give forth clear God-centeredness.

Invariably, the best hymns in hymn books come from the pens of those who were deep in the Scriptures and intimate fellowship with the LORD.

Today, all too often an average church service will be comprised of forty-five minutes of experience-man-centered music and a short, non-convicting, feel-good sermon. Reading God's Word is considered boring. Confronting the congregation with the truth of God's Word is not desired... or even permitted.

Entertainment is in— often in the name of trying to reach sinners on their level of paganism. But in reality, how many of the church members would show up at church meetings if those meetings lacked ENTERTAINMENT VALUE?

Religious entertainment by music and by comedy is BIG BUSINESS in the modern conservative, fundamental churches of America. It seems to not bother folks that week after week they leave church services with little if any Gospel driven, Holy Spirit inspired assignments and/or convictions.

People crying out for mercy and grace due to the reality of their sin and iniquity resulting from powerfully proclaimed sermons **has been replaced with** wild-eyed emotionalism, and/or 'Christian' comedy, or some other form of religious entertainment.

Repentance has been replaced with performing arts. Sin is not brought up... because, after all, our behavior problems are psychological and are not matters for receiving Holy Spirit, Bible inspired revelations and solutions.

**** There is a preoccupation with recreation.**

Look at the programs of most of the 'successful' churches today. What do you see? Softball leagues. Aerobic exercise classes. Basketball leagues. Volleyball games. Yoga classes. Karate classes. Gymnastic classes. Dance classes and etc. Many of today's 'successful' churches have become little more than glorified religious amusement parks. The masses love it! Thus,

about 75% to 85% of the GROWTH of ‘successful’ churches’ comes from smaller churches who do not have the finances to compete.

NOTE: Some of the common, listed ‘activities’ of the successful churches may not be wrong in and of themselves.

It is just that for much of modern Christendom, the ‘drawing and keeping card’ is NOT JESUS AND HIS HOLY WORD!

IN CONTRAST, in the New Testament Church— JESUS CHRIST/ the GOSPEL preached/ the GOSPEL lived was the drawing card! They used the Gospel alone to arrest the world’s attention and bring folks to conversion. They relied upon the Gospel alone to HOLD folks to commitment and to build the New Testament Church. **True conversion brings the INDWELLING POWER of the Holy Spirit which results in FRUIT THAT REMAINS! No one needs to be pumped up or bribed. (Acts 2:42-47)**

QUESTION: From the above realities and Scripture— what is Jesus saying to us?

MAKE a GODLY DIFFERENCE in Powerful, Every day Ways!

The Christ-like spirit of the church is a most tangible thing. When we gather for services you can sense it, even see and hear it; and most importantly each one of us makes it happen. **This spirit, of which we speak, is the product of the Holy Spirit— the inner spirit of our lives shining through smiles, greetings, conversations, conduct, and so much more.**

There is the kindly courtesy of our greeting one another. **There is** the warm handclasp of friendly interest. **There is** the heartfelt participating in a Sunday School Class or a Prayer Service or a Worship Service.

There is, in the Worship Service, the centering of our attention upon our primary business of the hour, the worship of God as...

- 1. We gather to** give HIM praise and adoration and honor.
- 2. We gather to** give Him ourselves, our gifts, talents, and offerings.

3. We gather to give united hearts crying out, ***“Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory! Amen!”***

4. We gather to sit at HIS FEET and to receive HIS WORD.

5. We commit ourselves to heed HIS Word.

A further revelation about the SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH is seen as we NEVER SPEAK OF THE CHURCH as "they"— rather, the church family to which JESUS has united me is always "we" or "us" or "our."

Thus, even (and especially!) when there are times when the spirit of the church is not high and fine, we never blame "they" or "them"— rather, we search our own hearts.

And we stand ready to repent of our own failures; and ready to contribute needed forgiveness, godliness, purity, joy, faith, hope and love.

We stand eager and ready to help and serve.

MOREOVER, we refuse to think evil or speak evil or to listen to evil about our brothers and sisters.

In addition, we are not merely those who are willing to serve if all goes according to our personal liking; rather, we are the LORD'S SERVANTS and will be found at our duty posts in all the seasons of life.

QUESTION: IS SOME, much, or even all of the above not true in our lives? Then let us repent and go forward!

Continuing revelations of The Spirit of the Church at Southside are seen as we all refuse to be side-tracked from the powerful everyday ways that God delights to use us to build up His Kingdom:

1. I CAN AND WILL BE FOUND PRAYING for the rule and reign of God in and through us in our individual lives, in our homes, at our work places and especially in the midst of our church family.

2. I CAN AND WILL BE FOUND TALKING UP my brothers and sisters and not talking them down. I refuse to do satan's work of TALKING fault-finding, accusing, back-biting, slandering, tale bearing, or discord

sowing. RATHER, I choose to do Christ's work of loving, blessing, praying for, and doing good. I choose to speak words of patience, kindness, and encouragement.

If I see a brother or sister overtaken in a fault, I choose to go to them privately and in humility to seek to be Christ's agent of healing. I CHOOSE to speak well of my brothers and sisters.

I choose to speak well of the Body of Christ called Southside. There is so much to give thanks for as we look at the various works of God's grace in the midst of the saints at Southside.

Because it is a glorious testimony to my Savior, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, I will speak well of the local church to which He has joined me.

Nothing of the work that Christ is yet to complete in the Body at Southside is ever godly grounds to deny or minimize the amazing grace of God already done and being done.

I choose NOT to persecute JESUS! Living in the fear of God, I remember that the words and attitudes I manifest toward my brothers and sisters reveal words and attitudes I am, in fact, manifesting toward Jesus!

I may sing and preach and testify loudly and have a reputation of being a great spokesperson for Jesus. **But what I say and do toward another Christian reveals the reality of what I have just said and done to Jesus. (Acts 9:4-5)**

When I or when any of us participate in satan's work of fault-finding, accusing, back-biting, slandering, tale bearing, discord sowing, and/or evil speaking **against another Christian or against any local Bible-believing church or against our spouse— WE ARE PERSECUTING JESUS!**

3. I CAN AND WILL BE FOUND READY, TRUE AND FAITHFUL so that I am a contributing, building up member of the Body of Christ at Southside. I choose to give full proof of my own faith in and love for JESUS by my faithful contributions to the building up of the Body of Christ at Southside.

In the midst of the crookedness of this present world, I will walk uprightly in all my dealings with both saints and sinners.

In the local body of Southside, **I may be a "little toe" or an "arm" or an "ear" or "a hand"....or I may not feel sure as to what my gifts are.**

However, I know that we are all built up by the streams of grace that God has ordained to flow through one to another, (Ephesians 4: 11-16; 1 Corinthians 12). **Thus, I embrace all of the many "One To Another" commands of my LORD, on behalf of my brothers and sisters.**

4. I WILL CHOOSE TO OPEN MY EYES TO THE HARVEST— for souls are perishing. Some time ago, 10,000 active Christians were asked this question:

"Who or what was DID GOD USE in your coming to Christ and/or in bringing you to the church you attend?" Here is how they replied: 2%- I had a special need. **4%-** I just decided to. **6%-** I liked the pastor. **½ of 1%-** I attended a revival service. **78%- A friend or relative influenced and/or invited me!** **9½%-** All other reasons.

Therefore, let us each and every one go out into our daily world and live holy and humbly, and live lovingly and forgivingly, and live to give kindness and hope, and live to be a blessing to others, and live OPENLY confessing Christ!

Such Christ-like living helps to create ENTRANCE WAYS so as to be empowered to influence and invite others to Christ and to the local assembly where God has us worshipping. **For it is the will of God that** when we bring folks to our Sunday School classes and Worship Services that they will be able to experience, to see the GOSPEL we have been telling them about!

5. I CHOOSE TO LIVE BY THE WORD OF GOD! THUS, I embrace the truth spoken by Martin Luther:

"For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving; my warrant is the Word of God; naught else is worth believing. I'll trust in God's unchanging Word Till soul and body sever: for, though all things shall pass away, HIS WORD shall stand forever!"

With THANKSGIVING to God for the Saints in Christ at Southside!

James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Contact Bradley at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS: ☐ **6:30pm— Children** Ministry/activities; ☐ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)

☐ **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE...** Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Studies in the Gospel of Luke! ... NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, *February 14, 2017* @ 11:00am; Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! {*STUDYING the Epistle of First John*} AT THE back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning, walk forward, coffee & biscuits WAITING!

Sunday Services:

**** February 5, 12 9:30am** - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service

Noon Covered Dish meal and 1pm afternoon service

**** February 19: 9:30am** - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service / NO meal or afternoon service

HOME GROUPS MEET... usually at 5pm

**** February 26: 9:30am** - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service

Noon Covered Dish meal / NO afternoon service

☐ **5:30PM - 7:30PM FAITHFUL MEN'S MONTHLY**

FELLOWSHIP/STUDY/EQUIPPING: Continuing in the 16 TESTS of an AUTHENTIC New Testament Church... be prepared for Concept 7& 8

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: JUNE 25-30☐ SUMMER CAMP!